

Western Hemisphere

BOLIVIAN JUNTA LEADER PREPARES TO BE ELECTED PRESIDENT

Bolivian Junta President Rene Barrientos, during one of his weekly trips to the provinces, declared that he would "consent" to be a compromise presidential candidate in the elections scheduled for 30 May.

[REDACTED]

Meanwhile, earlier indications that Barrientos would seek political support from centrist groups, as well as his own Popular Christian Movement (MPC) which was launched on 1 January, are being borne out. He claims to have the support of Hernan Siles' reorganized National Revolutionary Movement. He also seems to be interested in recruiting the Authentic Revolutionary Party, headed by Walter Guevara Arze.

Extremist parties--the rightist Bolivian Socialist Falange (FSB) and Juan Lechin's National Leftist Revolutionary Party (PRIN)--apparently will be excluded from the Barrientos bandwagon. Campaign tactics, however, include efforts to undercut these parties and to draw off some of their membership. In such a maneuver last

week, Barrientos heatedly attacked pro-Communist labor leader Lechin during a press conference but refrained from criticizing the PRIN.

Barrientos continues to believe that he can trust or use a number of persons with Communist backgrounds. Antonio Arguedas,

[REDACTED] has become one of his top campaign managers

[REDACTED]

General Barrientos appears to be growing more self-assured and seems confident that he can compete successfully with the professional politicians. Apparently he is working well with the commander of the armed forces, General Ovando.

[REDACTED]

Approved for Release
Date 1998
FEB